

# Current Developments

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## *From the Office of the State Conservationist*

It is finally spring after a not-so-harsh winter. We think of spring time as the beginning of the evolution of a new year...fresh flowers, new grass, and the pleasant smell of the earth after a rain. So, it is fitting at this time that we take a "fresh" look at our conservation activities.

The amount of funds available to put conservation on the land is more than we have ever had in Tennessee. We are using revolutionary tools, such as ProTracts, Tool Kit 5.0, Performance Reporting System (PRS), and Geographic Information System (GIS). The method of dealing with our customers using the e-Government initiative is a fresh and new concept. Still, a new concept is to be initiated with the Conservation Security Program...a self assessment process that our customers can use in evaluating their conservation needs.

I am excited about this spring of 2004 and the challenges we have before us to deliver conservation to our customers. I am confident we can realize a successful year if everyone engages at his/her level of responsibility and continues to meet the expectations of our customers with the resources we have.

Thanks for your good work and I appreciate your continuing support and good efforts for conservation.

James W. Ford  
State Conservationist

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## Upcoming Events

June 21-25, 2004 Sacramento, CA	Nat'l Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees Training Conference
July 22, 2004 Milan, Tn	Milan No-Till Field Day
July 26-30, 2004 St. Paul, MN	SWCS Annual Conference
August 5,-6, 2004 Townsend, TN	TN State RC&D Council Meeting



### Darwin Newton Receives Outstanding Alumni Award from Western Kentucky University

Darwin L. Newton recently received the 2003 Outstanding Agriculture Alumni Award from Western Kentucky University (WKU).

Dr. Jenks Britt, Agriculture Department Head of WKU, stated that Darwin, a 1967 graduate of Western Kentucky University, has worked extensively over the past several years assisting the Agriculture Department in teaching, field trips, and recruitment. Darwin has also served on the Departments Alumni Advisory Board.

Dr. Britt stated this award is presented to individuals that have made a significant sustained contribution to the Agriculture Department. He noted that Darwin has provided outstanding support to the Department in the area of soil science and soil conservation.

Darwin has been an employee of the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service for 31 years. He has been the program manager for Soil Survey for NRCS in Tennessee for the past 19 years.

### Settle Receives USDA Forest Service National Rural Community Assistance Action Award

Roy Settle, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator for the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council is this year's winner of the National Rural Community Assistance Action Award. The Action Award recognizes individuals and groups who have successfully implemented the concepts found in the agency's strategy for assisting rural communities.

This prestigious award is one of only three such awards in the nation. Roy was presented a crystal trophy and certificate signed by Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth.



(l to r) Roy Settle, Appalachian RC&D Coordinator is presented National Rural Community Assistance Award by Lewis Kearney, Staff Officer, Cherokee National Forest

One thing usually leads to another, sometimes in quirky and unexpected ways. Who would have predicted that restoring a cranberry bog could lead to conservation easements and a land trust initiative. Or that an "Arts Trail" could lead to partnerships between local crafts persons, the Forest Service, and consignment businesses. Or that those partnerships could lead to non-traditional relationships among art councils, conservation groups, and welfare organizations—all community-based and heavily vested in the collaborative planning approach. Yet these are among the many synergistic actions that are energizing a dozen rural Tennessee communities under the stimulation of the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council and Coordinator, Roy Settle. This council emphasizes an unusual combination of community planning, low-income family opportunities, the arts, watershed restoration projects, and conservation education, leading to improvements in both the local economy and the environment.

A \$7,000 Forest Service grant has turned into a million dollar fish-raising industry and job opportunities for students at a previously underserved high school. Low-income citizens can now drive away from the welfare roles thanks to inexpensive cars available through the "First Wheels" project. Environmental awareness is rising as a result of conservation education programs and watershed restoration projects.

Through Settle's leadership, the Appalachian RC&D has spearheaded and facilitated dynamic actions that will lead to more vital communities and healthy ecosystems in the region. This award is a testament to the cooperation between the Cherokee National Forest and the Natural Resources Conservation Service RC&D program.

## Employees in the News

Current  
Developments

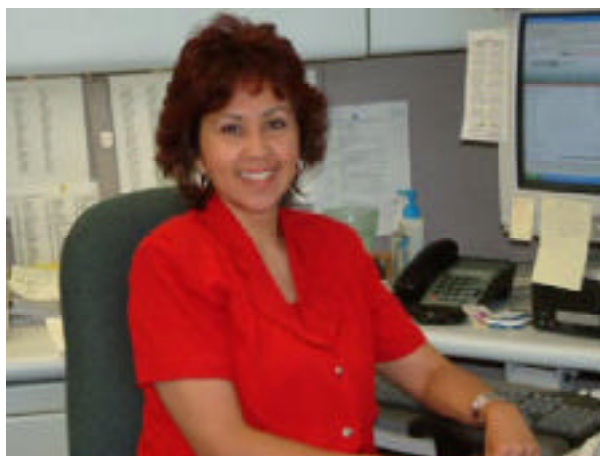
### Febe Ortiz, Deputy State Conservationist

Febe is a native of Texas and comes to Tennessee by way of the West Regional Office in Davis, California, where she was the Regional Operations Manager. Prior to that, she worked in New Mexico for seven years holding the following positions: Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, Assistant State Conservationist for Strategic Planning and Accountability, Acting State Administrative Officer and RC&D Program Manager. She began her career as a WAE, finished her degree, and began work full-time. She has worked as a Soil Conservation Technician, Soil Conservationist, District Conservationist, and RC&D Coordinator.

She and her husband Dale have two daughters, ages 11 and 7.



### Sandra Stewart, Budget Officer



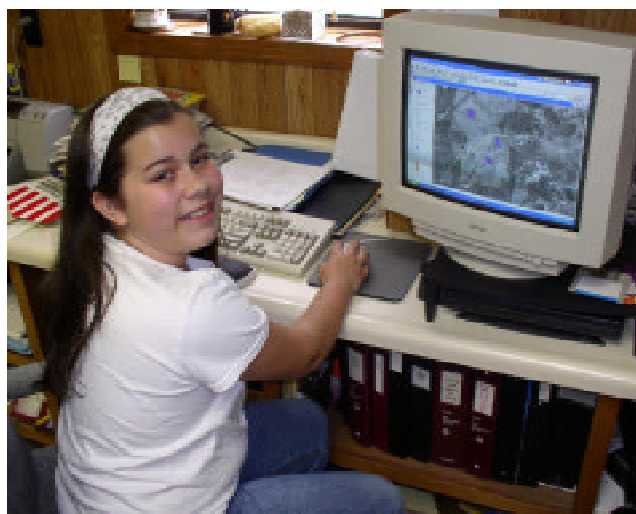
Sandra Stewart joined NRCS as the Budget Officer for Tennessee in January 2004. Originally from Washington, D.C., Sandy brings 16 years of federal budget experience to her position. Her years of government service have all been with USDA analyzing and preparing budgets at the national level for agencies such as ASCS, FCIC, and RD.

Sandy decided to put her federal career on hold for awhile to spend more time with her two growing boys. Later, after a visit to Tennessee, she and her family decided to relocate to Sparta where they live today. Prior to her return to USDA this year, she worked six years in private industry as a financial analyst.

### Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work

April 22, 2004 was national "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work" day. It is promoted by the Ms. Foundation for Women to help children reach their full potential, while expanding their future opportunities. This year's theme is "Today's Vision, Tomorrow's Reality". The program is intended to help introduce girls and boys to the vast range of potential job opportunities, while also allowing children to consider how their future work will fit into their lives.

Sarah Woodall of Camden spent the day with her dad, James Woodall who is a District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Both really enjoyed the day. When Sarah was asked what she enjoyed most about working with her dad she replied, "I liked working on the computer and drawing lines around fields. That was cool!"



Sarah Woodall, daughter of James Woodall, Camden

### Agroforestry Gains Interest in Hardin County

by Mark Roberts

District Conservationist Mark Roberts met with a group of professionals in Savannah to discuss the feasibility of a form of alternative agriculture called "Silvopasture" or "Agroforestry". Basically this means growing livestock and trees on the same land. The practice has been successfully used in other areas of the country, particularly the Coastal South where widely spaced native pines are grown for saw timber and the native grass community associated with this eco-system is grazed by livestock. The large quantities of Loblolly pine plantations in southern Tennessee associated with the pulp and paper industry attracted the attention of Dr. Joshua Idassi of Tennessee State University. Dr. Idassi thought Silvopasture could create greater economic opportunity in this area of the state, where livestock and pine plantations existed independently of each other.

Dr. Idassi set up a meeting with NRCS personnel and UT extension agents in Hardin, McNairy, Wayne, and Decatur Counties. Also present were NRCS Grazing Land Specialist Greg Brann and NRCS Forester Herb Paugh, and Hardin County landowner John Ross. Only one landowner was invited because this was to be an introductory meeting to determine if the practice would be technically feasible for the area and warrant further discussion among landowners. Mr. Ross, President of the Hardin County Forest Landowner's Association, agreed to serve as a "test subject" and offered his land as a convenient place to study the technical feasibility.

Although there was some initial skepticism, it was decided that there was enough possibility for success and landowner interest to warrant further discussion. The group decided to meet again in Savannah in May to hear from some Silvopasture experts to learn more about this unique and unconventional use of land for maximum economic returns.

### Johnson's Install Livestock Watering Facility

by Gary L. Blackwood

You probably don't give much thought to where your next drink of water will come from, since there is an abundance of quality water. We have it available in our houses, at work, you can even buy it at the store. What would you do if your ONLY source of drinking water was contaminated from bacteria, algae, feces and urine? You would have to drink it or die. You would probably survive, but your health would suffer. Many of the farms in Tennessee provide livestock their drinking water from small ponds, creeks and streams which are often contaminated with bacteria, algae, feces and urine. Research shows that livestock are healthier and adds weight faster when clean drinking water is provided to them. Also, by excluding livestock from ponds, creeks, rivers and streams, the resource is protected from erosion and contamination. By installing an alternative livestock watering facility both objectives can be met, provide clean water and protect the environment.

Recently Tony and Jason Johnson from Decaturville, installed such a system. With the assistance of NRCS, a facility was designed and installed that required two freeze proof tanks surrounded by rock heavy use areas to reduce mud in the wet seasons. A one inch pipe provides an abundance of city water. The ponds were either destroyed or fenced off. Jason said, "The cattle learned quickly how to push the ball down to access the water. They seem to be drinking more often and are healthier since switching over."

The materials for the Johnson's project were provided through a grant from TVA. TVA feels strongly in installing practices that will improve water quality in the Tennessee River. Over the past five years, through the efforts of our local farmers, NRCS, the Decatur and Henderson County Soil Conservation Districts, TVA, the TN Department of Agriculture, and the Chickasaw Shiloh RC&D, over 40 of these facilities have been installed.

### Wetland Reserve Program in Hardin County

Hydrology restoration was completed last fall on two Wetland Reserve Program easements in Hardin County. Shallow water areas with nesting islands were constructed along with one ditch plug.

NRCS employees and Earth Team volunteers vegetated disturbed areas with wildlife-friendly temporary cover. Natural succession will follow this growing season with native herbaceous vegetation on the nesting islands and on the intermittently exposed areas of the shallow excavation. Natural regeneration of hardwood trees is planned for one of the easement areas, while water-tolerant mast-producing trees will be planted on the other site.

The completion of these restoration plans brings the Hardin County total to ten WRP contracts with 926.6 acres of wetlands protected and improved.



## Focus on the Field - Area 2

Current  
Developments

### Soil Quality Demonstration Project—Robertson County

The Soil Quality Demonstration Project in Robertson County is a joint venture between the Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts, the Robertson County Soil Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Its purpose is to show long-term effects on soil quality under various conservation tillage practices. The project is located near Cedar Hill in Robertson County.

The project consists of five different treatments ranging from conventional tillage to no-till. The treatments are replicated three times for a total of 15 plots.

Baseline sampling was done in the fall of 2001 and the first replication sampling in the fall of 2003. Sampling will continue for three more sampling seasons.

Sampling is conducted using the Soil Quality Kit (developed by the Soil Quality Institute) and will measure the change on soil carbon, infiltration, bulk density, aggregate stability, respiration, pH, earthworms, and nitrates.

The overall goal is to demonstrate potential carbon sequestration through various conservation practices.



(Photo above, l to r): Debbie Brasfield, Jerry Prater, Darwin Newton, John Jenkins (photo below, l to r) David McMillen, and James Brown, shown taking soil samples on demonstration project.



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### Streambank Stabilization on Mansker's Creek

Hugh Jackson, District Conservationist in the Gallatin Field Office, worked with Derrick Rose, Eagle Scout on a stream bank stabilization on Mansker's Creek. Tim Ellis, Moss Wright Park Manager, authorized the project.

Herb Paugh, NRCS Forester, assisted by obtaining free seedlings from the Tennessee Division of Forestry. Thirty eagle scouts worked together to plant 300 seedlings which will protect the streambank along Mansker's Creek and provide long-term environmental benefit to Moss Wright Park.



## Focus on the Field - Area 3

Current  
Developments

### Beef Producers Meeting at York Agricultural Institute

by Dwight Dickson

The Fentress County SCD and NRCS held a Beef Producers meeting on March 16 at York Agricultural Institute. Over 70 people attended the event to hear representatives from ADM (feed company) on fly and parasite control. USDA Veterinarian Todd Duenckle spoke on Mad Cow Disease and other issues that face producers. UT representatives gave an overview of their programs and Dwight Dickson, NRCS District Conservationist, provided information on NRCS practices and gave an update on EQIP, GRP and other USDA programs available to landowners.



### Streambank Stabilization Project in Elizabethton

by Russell Kinser

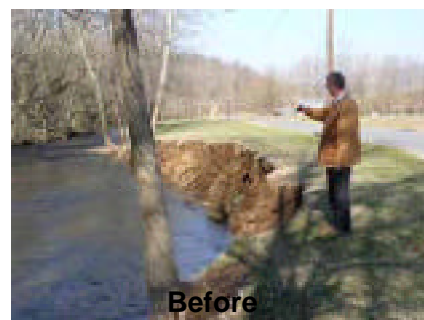
The city of Elizabethton in northeast Tennessee is benefiting from a conservation partnership which stabilized severely eroding stream banks adjacent to the Lions Field Little League recreation area. The Elizabethton High School Ecology Club brought the deteriorating stream bank condition to the attention of Ken Chase of the Boone Watershed Partnership and Russell Kinser, NRCS District Conservationist. The wheels of cooperation started rolling.

Ken and Gary Barrigar, Ecology Club advisor, coordinated with chapter members of the Overmountain Chapter of Trout Unlimited to secure cost share funds through Trout Unlimited's Embrace-A-Stream program. The Tennessee Valley Authority and the City of Elizabethton provided funding for the remainder of the installation cost. The Carter County Soil Conservation District served as local administering agent for part of the cost share funds.

Joe Zimmerman, NRCS engineer was enlisted to survey and design corrective measures to protect the two hundred feet of affected stream bank. J-hook jetties and rip rap toe protection were installed to stabilize the bank.

The jetties and toe armoring were built with three to four foot diameter rocks placed with a large backhoe. The tops of the banks were shaped and seeded to grass and then mulched. The Elizabethton High School Ecology Club planted hazel alder, buttonbush, silky dogwood, and river birch seedlings supplied by TVA. The Club then placed tree shelters, provided by TVA, around the seedlings to protect them from animal and weed eater damage.

The completed project will protect and beautify the stream bank of Buffalo Creek and also protect the park access road. Interpretive signage will be installed to explain to park visitors the reason for the "rocks in the creek".



Before

*Russell Kinser surveys eroding stream bank adjacent to the Lions Field Little League recreation area in the photo above.*



During



After

### Wildlife Habitat Field Day Held in Claiborne County

The Claiborne County Soil Conservation District/Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered with the National Wild Turkey Federation to host a tour of the Dr. Carroll Rose Wildlife Habitat Practice on May 7, 2004. In addition to Dr. Rose, other partners on the project were the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Tennessee Division of Forestry and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. The partnering agencies set up tour stops and provided information on:

- Prescribed Burning and Post Establishment NWSG Management
- Fescue Eradication and Establishment of NWSG for Wildlife Habitat
- Hack-squirt Woodland Openings for Wildlife
- Benefits of NWSG for Wildlife Habitat and Biology

The Rose Farm has over 700 acres with 150 acres planted in Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG). More than 270 people attended the tour. Four pesticide points were available and fifty-one people signed up to get their points.

Dr. Carroll Rose and wife, Janice, provided lunch while the Clinch Mountain Bluegrass Band performed. Three horse-drawn wagons allowed attendees to travel across the property in a mode similar to the early Appalachian settlers, thanks to Johnny Massengill, a local landowner. Attendees also had a chance to tour three appalachian cabins fully furnished with period antiques.



### York speaks at Rhea County Cattlemen's Association Meeting

The Dayton Field Office staff attended a meeting of the Rhea County Cattlemen's Association at the Wolf Creek Volunteer Fire Department in March. Gloria York, District Conservationist, spoke to the group about the various farm bill cost share programs including EQIP, WHIP, CRP, GRP, and CCRP. York also informed the group that the Rhea County SCD Had \$50,000 of State cost share assistance for BMPs in the Clear Creek- Cottonport Watershed which covers approximately a third of Rhea County. This money is from the Tennessee Conservation Fund administered by the TN Department of Agriculture. Applications for all programs were available to the approximately 65 attendees.



*Gloria York speaks to Rhea County Cattlemen's Association about USDA farm bill programs*



## Administrative Updates/Civil Rights Activities

Current  
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### Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

TSP Participant Statements are currently available only through the TSP web site. To access your personal statement you will need your social security number and personal identification number (PIN). If you have lost your PIN or never got one, you can request one at the TSP web site: [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

To have your Participant Statement mailed to your home address, you must request this method using the TSP web site.

### Savings Bonds

A great source of information on U.S. Savings Bonds is the web site <http://www.publicdebt.treas.gov/sav/sav.htm>

### New Special Emphasis Program Managers

Pam Hoskins, Soil Conservationist in Woodbury, is the new American Indian/Alaskan Native Employment Program Manager.

Laura Lee, Human Resources Specialist in the State Office, is the new Disability Employment Program Manager.

### Young Receives Federal Employee of the Year Award

Sharon Young, Human Resources Assistant, was presented the Federal Employee of the Year Award in the Category of Outstanding Technician on May 4. The award was presented at the Middle Tennessee Federal Executive Association's 2004 Federal Employee of the Year Awards Ceremony. Congratulations to Sharon!

### Employee Express and NFC Personal Page

NFC has enhanced the Employee Personal Page recently to include nearly all of the same information and self-service options as Employee Express, which is managed by OPM. In an effort to save agencies money by eliminating duplicate services, USDA has decided to cease its participation in Employee Express at the end of this fiscal year. If you do not already have a PIN to access your Employee Personal Page at NFC, you should access the web site and request one and begin getting used to this site in lieu of Employee Express. You can access the NFC Personal Page from My.NRCS. Additional information will be sent out on this change toward the end of the year.

### CRC Award—Outstanding Field Office Review—Bolivar

The Civil Rights Committee created a new award this year to recognize one field office each year for their outstanding efforts in the area of civil rights. Selection is based on the civil rights compliance reviews done in the state every year. This year's "winner" is the Bolivar Field Office.

Congratulations to Charles Frost and the entire staff in Bolivar!

### Beason's National Guard Unit Called to Active Duty

Darrell Beason, District Conservationist in the Livingston Field Office, is a member of a Tennessee National Guard unit that has been called to active duty effective May 20. His unit will spend three to four months in training before being deployed to Iraq.

Darrell began his federal service as a student trainee in the summer of 1990 in North Carolina and worked as a soil conservationist in North Carolina before coming to Tennessee as District Conservationist in the Wartburg Field Office. He has been the District Conservationist in the Livingston Field Office since 1997.

Darrell and his wife, Donna, have four children Andrea-15, Zach-10, Halie-7, and Chloe-2.

### Statewide Civil Rights Review

There will be a statewide review conducted by a team from the national NRCS Civil Rights Division during the week of May 24, 2004. In addition to the State Office, the team will also visit with employees and customers in nine field offices and one RC&D office.

### Civil Rights Committee

The Tennessee Civil Rights Committee (CRC) met in November and February. Much of the Committee's time during those two meetings was devoted to planning for the 2004 Diversity Day, which unfortunately had to be cancelled for this year. Other meeting highlights include: Limited resource farmers and minority farmers' participation in farm bill programs in Tennessee, reviews of the demographics of Tennessee-NRCS workforce, discussions on ways to improve categories with under-representation, and discussion on ways to increase visibility of the Committee.

The next Civil Rights Committee meeting will be May 18-19 in Columbia. The names and phone numbers of all Civil Rights Committee members can be found on the Civil Rights page of the NRCS-Tennessee website.



### Applications Underway for Two New RC&D Areas in Tennessee

Applications are underway for two new RC&D areas in Tennessee. The organizational meetings are being conducted to gather input from local communities on the resource needs and development opportunities to be addressed by the RC&D Program. Successful authorization of these two areas will result in all but 4 of Tennessee's 95 counties being in a RC&D area.

### Rhea County Students Celebrate Earth Day with Sammy Soil and Ruby Raindrop

Ruby Raindrop and Sammy Soil visited the Rhea County Preschool and Rhea Central Elementary Kindergarten classes in observance of Earth Day. Students had an opportunity to learn about conservation and had a chance to meet Sammy Soil and Ruby Raindrop.



#### Teacher's Conservation Workshop June 20-25 UT-Knoxville

For more information, contact:  
Tracy O'Neill, Program Coord.  
TN Forestry Association  
Phone: 615-883-3832  
Email: [toneill@tnforestry.com](mailto:toneill@tnforestry.com)

**Registration Deadline: June 2**

### Clarkrange Wins Statewide Envirothon Competition

Clarkrange took first place honors in the Tennessee statewide Envirothon Competition held on April 28 and 29, 2004 in Liberty, Tennessee. Clarkrange students have been winners of the statewide Envirothon competition four times. The competition included teams from 10 RC&D regions within the state. Clarkrange will now go to the National competition in West Virginia July 26 through August 1, 2004.

Members of the Clarkrange team include, in alphabetical order: Amber Buck, Megan Dunson, Adam Howard, Leann Little, and Monica Norris. Team coach is Dayon Taylor. Congratulations to Clarkrange!



### David Hassler Honored on Earth Day 2004

Hull-York Lakeland RC&D planted a tree at the Byrdstown Park on Earth Day 2004 in memory of David Hassler. Mr. Hassler was an Earth Team Volunteer and an RC&D director from 1976 until his death in May 2003. Dave, as everyone called him, served as Secretary/treasurer for several years before serving as Council President.

He was instrumental in several major projects for the council area. He and Robbie, his wife, are both natives of Pickett County where she still lives and carries on his legacy. The Hull-York Lakeland RC&D lost a true friend and conservationist, but his memory will always be apart of the council's history.

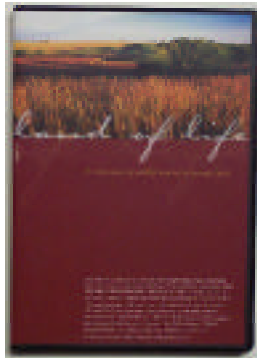


**Coming soon in DVD**

*Current  
Developments*

## ***Land of Life-***

*A tribute to landowners and conservationists who are improving our land, our water and our wildlife habitat on privately owned lands*



### **What is it?**

*Land of Life* is a high quality, 9-minute show in DVD format. It was shot in high definition video, with an original music score and surround sound. This scenic tribute to the nation's farmers and ranchers for their care of natural resources—in particular their recent improvements for wildlife habitat—has sparing narration and emotional appeal.

### **Who's it for?**

Anyone looking for an appealing show to open a local, state or regional meeting should consider this show. It is particularly suited as entertainment at awards banquets honoring people for their natural resource care. It could be used in classrooms, as well as with civic groups. It could also serve as a very good introduction to backyard conservation presentations to urban groups. It would work well at exhibits, with a DVD player and TV set.

### **What's included?**

As with most DVD's, this one includes a series of extras—in this case, a photogallery of spectacular scenery and soothing music; landowner interviews; TV spots; a collection of habitat facts; and links to organizations concerned about the environment.

### **Who produced it?**

It was produced by a cooperating group of conservation and farm groups, including conservation districts, with lead sponsorship from the American Soybean Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Monsanto. Technical help was provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### **How do I get copies?**

Each local (county) soil and water conservation district (3000 in the United States) has been given a copy.

### **Equipment needed?**

You need a DVD player and a television with line in/line out connections, if you plan to show to a small group. This is the same setup as with a video player, except you use a DVD player, now available for less than \$100. If the audience is larger, you need a video projector and sound system; the DVD player uses line in/line out connections similar to the VCR. For added sound, consider a small home theater sound system or a boom box.

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